

God as the Father, in Jesus as the Son, or the Holy Spirit as a guide and comforter, neither is it our belief in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, or our belief in the atonement and saving power of the Master, nor is it our belief in the inspiration of the New Testament, that distinguishes us from other Christian sects. But it is our church policy and peculiar observances of the ordinances of God's house as we believe them. These are our distinctive church personalities. Now if these doctrine are of God; if Christ intended that they be promulgated; and if they are essential for the full development or Christian character, then we as a church are obliged not only to God, but to humanity as well for their promulgation. And if they are not essential for a full development of Christian character; if Christ did not intend that they be used after the first century; if Christ meant that his first disciples were to practice them and his church in the twentieth century would be above such observances, then we sin if we teach and observe them. For if such were true we would be burdening God's church with dead weights which will serve as breaks, retarding the great Christian cause. And if such were true we are hindering the church at large by withdrawing ourselves from it, and it would be high time that we disorganize our church and join one that does not teach and observe as we do. But we as a church believe that Christ meant to have these ordinances taught and lived through the centuries that were to follow his life on earth. And we also believe them to be essential for a well rounded and fully developed character, and that we owe it to the Fatherhood of God, the Sonship of Christ and Brotherhood of man for their being taught? Will a catechism aid or is it needful to teach our doctrines? The way they are mostly taught at present is by a sermon now and then, and by tracts. This way is good. But it seems to the writer this is not sufficient in that it does not always result in unity of teaching, while some ministers may preach them too much and others not enough. By our present method much more preaching is required on doctrine than would be if we had a catechism. For then the laity would, by the aid of a catechism, become better acquainted with our ordinances, and by its aid people in general would likewise be better instructed, thus saving the ministry much of this work. If we preach them too much we may make a hobby of them to the exclusion of the great underlying principles of Christianity, becoming like the Jews, observers of form and not of spirit. I believe our distinctive church doctrines should be kept before the people equally with the other doctrines of Christianity. And this can best be most satisfactorily attained with the aid of a Catechism. For in it the great principles of Christianity, which all protestant sects agree, would be emphasized together with the characteristics that set us apart from all other Christian organizations. This

would bring our peculiarities before the people but not at the expense of any Christian principle. The Brethren church prides herself as being free from any creed save the Word. We are also without any written Theology. We have a faith in certain ordinances, but I will venture to say if many of our people were asked to defend their position, they would be lost when asked for Bible reasons for their belief. Why? Because they have not been judiciously taught. If they were given explanation and interpretations, the texts and their bearing, they could inform themselves more easily and more intelligently. They would have the teachings of the church upon the various doctrines and ordinances, and would be so arranged that the children would have the essentials placed before them in the simplest and most forcible way. Then our children would be taught our beliefs from childhood, in such a way that they could not help but grow into our faith. They would eat it, drink it, breathe it, live it. Their very nature would become saturated in it so they would never wholly depart from our faith. Then as they grew to maturity, so would they at the same time grow into the church.

The natural results of such teaching would be to bring into our church the children who rightfully belong to us, our member's children. If the Brethren church expects to grow, filling its ranks with material that is fully in sympathy with its doctrines, it must draw this material mostly from its own people. To be sure the Brethren church desires to convert to her faith all who will come. And if her doctrines are of God, as we believe, we must go out and herald our truth to the world. But her true, sincere and self-sacrificing men and women, those who will have her cause at heart, will come generally, not always, from those who have been reared in Brethren homes, that, too, invariably from those who have been the most thoroughly indoctrinated in our faith. Thus you can at once perceive the great importance of saving our children. This I believe, a catechism will do better than any other agent we may use. Why? Because no other agent can be used so effectively; no other can be made as a whole, so intelligently for the young plastic mind; no other can have such lasting effects. Why, do you ask? Because it is a psychological fact that whatever is put in the child's mind colors and molds his entire future life; and that he will interpret the world and things about him in the light of past experiences. Then, who can deny the importance of our children while young being taught God and his most holy will. For if they are thus taught, they can never wholly depart from it. It will cling to them as tenaciously as the grips of a well formed habit, molding their lives into its own likeness as the molds of a smelter molds images after its own design. I see no reason why a catechism would not be a great factor in accomplishing this desired end. For it would fill the young mind with God and his ways;

revealing to the child early in life God's love and true goodness, thus molding the individual for future life as God would have him be. And when such a child reaches maturity its direction would be toward God over the Brethren's road. Being taught God's ways in the light and knowledge of the Brethren church, the child would look at God and the world in a great measure at least, thru the teachings of our church.

Again, a catechism will counteract the idea that it makes no difference what you believe. At present there are scores of people who believe anything will do, one church is as good as another. This belief is dangerous not only to the individual but to the church as well. It first leads to a relaxation of faith and then to a total separation from God or a failure to ever accept him. It is a fact that at the age of 18 the religious tendencies are fixed. It is true they may not live them. But if they ever do, they will go in the direction of these early fixed tendencies. If their teachings previous to this age are indefinite, without purpose, and with the idea that anything will do, they are almost sure to end out of Christ. Such belief and results a catechism will tend to prevent. For it will teach the child definite ideas of God, giving it definite purposes before it reaches a mature age. Then when it turns to God it will not come with the idea that anything will do, and if things do not go pleasing in the Brethren church it can go somewhere else, but it will come with a fixed purpose and definite ideas. In churches where a catechism is used the child grows up into the faith of its parents. Its conceptions of God in a measure are fixed, and if it ever accepts God, this early training determines its actions. Therefore if our church were to use a catechism our children would grow with fixed ideas and not have their minds filled with that "stuff" anything or church will do. This belief is too prevalent among our people already, and should be checked, in order that our church may do the great work God has planned for her in bringing men back to the simplicity, beauty and power of the gospel as taught by Jesus and practiced by the apostles and Christian fathers.

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## The Home

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### Two Religions

A woman sat by a hearthside place  
Reading a book, with a pleasant face,  
Till a child came up with a childish frown  
And pushed the book, saying, "Put it down."  
Then the mother, slapping his curly head,  
Said, "Troublesome child, go off to bed;  
A great deal of Christ's life I must know  
To train you up as a child should go."  
And the child went off to bed to cry,  
And denounce religion—by and by.

Another woman bent o'er a book  
With a smile of joy and an intent look,  
Till a child came up and jogged her knee,  
And said of the book, "Put it down—take me."  
Then the mother sighed as she stroked his head,  
Saying softly, "I never shall get it read;  
But I'll try by loving to learn his will,  
And his love into my child instill."  
That child went to bed without a sigh,  
And will love religion—by and by.